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"The "Blond" Eskimo-- A Question of Method

In the American Anthropologist for July-September, 1921, Diamond Jenness reopens the discussion of the cause of the reported 'blondness' in the Copper Eskimo. He takes the stand that the theory of Scandinavian infusion among these people is groundless. With this position I have no quarrel. Indeed, after an examination of some of the 'blond' hair, I am rather in sympathy with it. The first six pages of Mr. Jenness's article are as logical and critical as might be asked for. In these pages it is made clear that the 'blondness' referred to is by no means a Scandinavian blondness, but a slight diminution of pigmentation such as is quite frequently seen among Chinese, Japanese, Polynesians, Indians, and other Mongoloid peoples.

Mr. Jenness then undertakes to show by anthropometry that the Copper Eskimo are unmixed. He has apparently succeeded to his own satisfaction. It is to be feared, however, that his method will not meet with the approval of those who are in any degree inclined to be critical.

The author takes Mr. Stefánsson to task for using the transverse cephalo-facial and transverse cranio-facial indices as evidence of a Scandinavian or European infusion. He states that these indices are not standard and not those usually used in questions relating to race. Mr. Jenness goes on to inform us that 'the best indications in regard to

race, as far as physical measurements are concerned, are derived, according to the opinions of the leading anthropologists, from the stature, and the proportions of the length of the head to its breadth, i.e., the cephalic index.'

Now stature would be valuable in studying a mixture between Eskimo and Scandinavians because there is a tremendous difference in the average stature of the two groups. Yet it is apparently not for this reason that it has been selected by Mr. Jenness. He selected it because 'it is recommended by our leading anthropologists,' but he does not seem to know what to do with it. He chooses one group, the Ammassalik Eskimo, as purest, and another, the Southwestern [236] Greenland Eskimo, as the most mixed. Because the Southwestern Eskimo are shorter than the Ammassalik he reasons that intermixture with Scandinavians would result in a group with a shorter average stature than either parental group. If this be true, it is certainly something heretofore unknown. All studies in human hybridization point to an opposite conclusion. Hybrids are either intermediate between the two parental stocks or taller than either parental stock. The fallacy of the method employed is of course the comparison of two separate groups. The logical method of deducing the effect of intermixture would have been to have compared mixed and unmixed members of the same group.

When Mr. Jenness found the Copper Eskimo 19 and 26 millimeters taller than the male and female Ammassalik Eskimo, he concluded that this evidence might also be said to point against Scandinavian admixture. If we were to approve of the method of

comparing two groups we could only conclude that the reverse is true. It should also be mentioned that intermixture with Indians would probably affect stature in the same direction as would intermixture with Scandinavians. For this reason evidence from stature alone would not be conclusive.

In fairness to Mr. Jenness, it should be said that he does not make much of the difference in stature and apparently did not expect much from it. Most of his faith has been put in the cephalic index. Using the same method of inter-group comparison he finds:

Ammassalik men	77.6	women	76.7
Copper Eskimo men	76.9	women	75.6

From this he concludes:

The difference in the figures are so slight as to be practically negligible; they might, indeed, almost disappear if we had a greater number of cases to go by.

Ignoring the fact that the chances are just as great that the differences might increase 100 per cent, it is difficult to see what a strict coincidence would prove. Mr. Jenness does not tell us what result he expected from the intermixture of the two long-headed groups. The range of the cephalic index is about the same in the Scandinavian and Eskimo. From this it is of course apparent that the cephalic index is perhaps the most worthless criterion that could be selected.

Whether or not the transverse cephalo-facial index and the transverse cranio-facial index are standard, it is a fact that they, together [227] with absolute width of face, have proved the most useful criteria of race mixture between mongoloid stocks and the white races. Professor Boas has repeatedly used them to good advantage. Doctor Jenks, in an elaborate study of Indian-White amalgamation, used the same criteria effectively.

In studying the results of intermixture of two groups one naturally selects those characteristics that are most widely contrasted in the two parental groups. In the case at hand the most obvious differences between the Eskimo and Scandinavians are pigmentation, stature, width of face (and consequently transverse cephalo-facial and cranio-facial indices) and the index of the build. From an anthropometric standpoint absolute face width and the transverse cephalo-facial index are most satisfactory. There is a smaller amount of overlapping in the two groups in both of these characters than in most anthropometric traits. As stated above, the range and mean value for the cephalic index is practically identical in the Eskimo and Scandinavians and consequently we would not expect it to be altered in intermixture.

There is no universal standard for use in testing racial homogeneity. One thing is applicable in one case and another thing in another case. The cephalic index would be most useful in studying the effects of intermixture of Scandinavians and Lapps, North Italians and South Italians or the Apache and Pima. In studying the intermixture of

most mongoloid peoples and whites we should preferably use absolute face width, absolute bigonial diameter or the transverse cephalo-facial index. If we were dealing with Negro-White intermixture we should probably select the nasal diameters and proportions. And so on. These other measurements and indices are just as standard as is the cephalic index.

In addition to criticising Mr. Jenness's selection of anthropometric criteria, I also object to his method of geographic comparison. By this I do not mean that the method is never valid or valuable. When we have a fairly complete and continuous geographical distribution of data such as exists for Sweden and Italy such comparison yields most conclusive results. But in camparing widely separated groups it is difficult to determine whether or not small differences are due to selection, environment, or intermixture. It is only when a mass of evidence points in the same direction that we can safely interpret it. The evidence under discussion is not of this type.

I do not wish to be understood as arguing for or against a Euro- [228] pean origin of 'blondness' in the Eskimo. My criticism is confined to the method employed in trying to establish the truth or falsity of the theory. My point is that as far as anthropometric evidence is concerned the question of the European or non-European origin of 'blondness' in the Eskimo stands exactly where it stood before Mr. Stefánsson and Mr. Jenness took up the discussion.

Let us hope that Mr. Jenness will give us a fuller presentation of the valuable data he possesses. It would be interesting if he could establish his three types anthropometrically. At least he should portray them photographically."